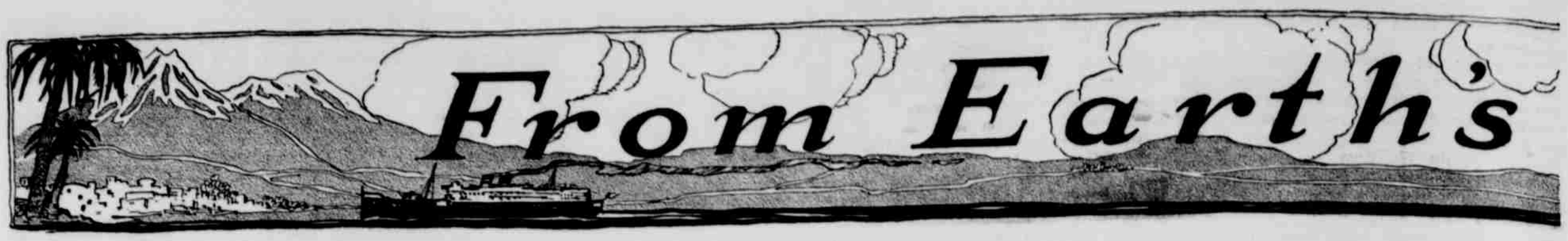

The Horrors of Typhus in Poland

By MADELINE A. LINFORD

ZAWIERCIE is a little town in South Poland, about 180 miles from Warsaw on the main line to Cracow. The journey, in a train only stopping at four or five intermediate stations, took me twelve hours. As far as its conditions go, it is not very different from a hundred other Polish towns. It is certainly no worse off than most of them and very much better than those nearer the present battle-front. I spent most of my stay in Poland there because it is the headquarters of the Anglo-American Relief Mission of the Society of Friends.

The only industry of the town is centered in a cotton factory, which normally employs practically all the available labor. Just now the lack of fuel and raw material has brought it almost to a standstill and out of the 26,000 population of Zawiercie fewer than 2,000 people are at present employed. Those who have been dismissed are given an out-of-work donation of 15 marks a week—and bread costs 16 marks for a 2-pound loaf.

Zawiercie seemed amazingly true to one's preconceived notions of the sad towns of Poland. There was snow everywhere and livid, biting cold. The place has a wild sort of beauty like the death cry of a bird. Most of the houses are huddled together around the station as though in an effort to keep warm; others are tossed away on the white stretches where slender dark pine trees stand in lonely clusters. There is a red brick church and a school, both built by the factory owners, and a very few middle-class houses, each guarded at night by a watchman. There is a priest and one doctor and no rich people at all. In villages a few miles from the town, inhabited perhaps by 800 people, there is no shop, no church, no doctor. There is no contact with the civilization nor the outer world. When the people sicken with the typhus—as easily as we catch cold—there is no one to nurse them nor to soften with comfort the utter dreariness of their death. In a house in one of these hamlets Mission workers found nine dead bodies.

(C) Harris & Ewing

BRAZIL'S AMBASSADOR
This is Augusto Cochrane de Alencar, Brazil's new ambassador to the United States. He has been here only a few days but has already shown signs of as much popularity with government officials as that enjoyed by his predecessor, Ambassador de Gama.

It was to rid Zawiercie of the terrible ravages of typhus that the Anglo-American Mission began its work there last August. For two years during the war the town had been in German occupation, and in that period the epidemic was kept down to an average of about twenty fresh cases a month. The Germans installed excellent disinfectant machinery and carried on a very thorough system of delousing. Directly they left, the plague increased to an appalling extent, until in March, 1918, two hundred and five fresh cases broke out. Today the average is below twenty.

The awful disease of typhus is carried by lice, and the housing conditions in Poland are very conducive to the spreading of it. In Zawiercie I visited over thirty families and not one had more than a single room to live in; often three or four families live, eat and sleep in a tiny hovel with a ceiling scarcely above the height of one's head and a window that does not open. There is no sanitation whatever in these houses, and every drop of water has to be carried from somewhere down the street. Soap is prohibitively dear. These people can hardly be blamed for the terrible state of filth and vermin in which the Mission workers found them. Whole families sickened of typhus and died one after another.

The delousing plant left behind by the German military authorities was taken over by the Mission. They went from house to house, doing on an average 15 a day, and thoroughly cleaning and disinfecting each. In cases where the inhabitants were old or delicate, tubs and a stove for heating water were carried around, too. The others were brought to the anti-typhus baths of the Mission. These are in low buildings, built around three sides of a square with large boilers in the open space in which the clothes are disinfected by steam. One end of the buildings is the "dirty end" and the other the "clean end." When the bathers have been through the processes of hair-cutting and scrubbing with soft soap, they reach the "clean end" where they are given their clothes, a cup of cocoa and some such gift as a shirt, or a petticoat, or a bar of soap.

In three months the Friends' Mission completely washed the homes and families of Zawiercie, and in only one house deloused by them has there since been a case of typhus. The disinfectant plant has now been converted into a mobile column which goes through the neighboring villages on its work of mercy. The baths are being used for soldiers passing through Zawiercie, and for people who have come in contact with typhus. On the day I visited them, a number of naked children were waiting in the "dirty end" and a woman was having her long hair cut. Out in the yard a boiler was puffing a wisp of pungent steam into the cold blue sky.

Two members of the Mission—an English man and woman—died last December from typhus caught during their brave and splendid labors among these sad people.

I am not exaggerating when I say that Zawiercie may be regarded as typical of many other little towns in Poland—there are no words in which one could exaggerate the miseries of Poland—when I say that I had not thought that the world could hold such a hole of tragedy and horror. I went there from Vienna where conditions are dreadful enough, heaven knows, but I went completely unprepared for what I found in Poland. During the few days I spent there, I saw such things as I hope never to see again.

The tragedy of the place, the awful, indescribable misery of it, gave one a feeling that all the color, light and laughter of the world are as unreal as the tinsel glory of a pantomime.

The greatest lack is food. Bread at 16 marks for 2 pounds is an unattainable luxury, though I have seen women standing six hours in the street—standing on frozen snow with the keen wind blowing their one garment around bare limbs—for a quarter-of-a-pound piece of black bread. Sometimes a little cornmeal can be got; otherwise the only article of food is potatoes. There is no milk at all, no meat and no fats. Babies who are not fed by their half-starved mothers have no food but potatoes. In most cases they die and a funeral wails its way through the gaunt streets—but far greater is the tragedy of the children who do not die.

In the infant clinic recently opened by the Friends' Relief Mission in Zawiercie, I saw several scores of children brought by their mothers for gifts of dried milk and cod liver oil. Except for a peaky-faced baby who caused a sensation by smiling at us, not a single child showed any sign of animation at all. At least two-thirds of those over two years old could not walk. In many cases they had walked at one time, but when their mothers had weaned them and their diet became only potatoes, they had grown hopelessly crippled with rickets. Their bodies, except for the horribly distended stomachs, were just bones covered with yellow, wrinkled skin. One baby was a raw mass of sores as a result of malnutrition; several were consumptive.

It was amazing to me that they could be alive at all. In the local orphanage 30 children are under the gentle care of a good nun and everything that kindness can do for them is done. Yet three-quarters of them are hopelessly diseased through underfeeding, and not one is healthy or normal. A few that I saw were such ghastly caricatures of childhood that I prefer not to attempt to describe them. One or two were lying quite still under coverlets, and I tiptoed up to them, thinking they were asleep, but they were awake, gazing with shadowy, sunken eyes into space, indifferent to me or anything around them. They will spend the rest of their lives like that, for starvation has left them so deformed that they cannot walk, sit, nor stand.

Three afternoons of my stay in Zawiercie I spent in visiting the homes of people who had come in the morning to the Mission's welfare center. As I have already said, no family owned more than a single room. Each one was full of misery. Fuel is so precious and the inhabitants so wretchedly clad, that the doors and windows were never opened, and the atmosphere was thick with the choking fumes of the stove. In one or two cases the family bed had a coverlet on it, but generally the beds were heaped just with dirty straw. Many houses did not contain a single crumb of food, and had no prospect of getting any. One house I saw was scarcely worse than the others, but it made an impression on me which I think I can never lose. The father was out of work, and there were five children. They and the mother were barefooted, and each wore one single ragged garment. There was a bed, without coverings, a stove and a chair in the room, and that was all. Except for the tin of dried milk which the Mission had that morning given for the baby, there was not a particle of food. The children had starvation written so plainly and cruelly on their faces that it was almost unbearable to look at them. They were absolutely listless and silent. One of them, a five-year-old girl, was a lovely child with pale brown hair and a little delicate face like a cameo.

In another home four small children were sitting in a row on the floor, the baby wailing monotonously. Their mother had been out all day standing in a bread queue. She had stood in it on the previous day too, and in the end had not been able to bring anything home. Those children had had nothing to eat for about 36 hours, and in all probability their mother would return again empty-handed.

After food, the great need in Poland is clothing. It is absolutely impossible for the peasants to buy garments or material of any kind. Every week babies are born to people who have literally not one single rag to put around them. You see few people in the streets, because only a few have clothes to go out in. Rags cannot be mended because there is no sewing cotton; the lack of both soap and a change of rags intensifies the horror. One grows familiar with the bleak look of cold on the faces of the inhabitants and the perpetual shuddering of half-frozen bodies. Only the starvation shadow in children's eyes is more dreadful to see.

These Polish peasants impressed me as being people whom its is very well worth-while to help. For the wonderful self-sacrificing labors of the Friends' Relief Mission they are most touchingly grateful. They are a religious, simple-minded folk and amazingly patient. An American Red Cross officer told me that he had seen numbers of Polish soldiers have limbs amputated without any anaesthetic and had never heard one cry out. I myself watched little children endure, without a whimper, great agony during the dressing of sores. They are very charming, these children with pretty, gentle manners and fair skins. I think very often of those I saw and wonder how many of them—frail emaciated bodies and sunken wistful eyes—have died since then of starvation and sorrow.

Canada Builds Up Shipping

BY THE end of the current year the Canadian Government expects to have a mercantile marine with a net tonnage of 360,000. Following on the heels of the Commonwealth of Australia whose shipbuilding plans form the major part of that industry in Australia, Canada is to expand her activities, previously limited to building freight-carrying vessels, and will construct liners of 15,000 tons.

Her freight-carrying vessels have ranged from lake-sized vessels of 3,750 tons to ocean-going vessels up to 10,500 tons. In all, 23 of these vessels are in commission, and 60 more are under construction in Dominion yards.

The 15,000-ton liners will be of the one-class passenger and freight description, with a speed of 18 knots. C. C. Ballantyne, Minister of Marine, recently said that the Dominion expects to build ships at a cost of $25 per ton dead-weight less than the cost ruling during the war, when it was a little less than $200 per ton.

Shipbuilding, other than governmental orders, is making rapid strides in the Dominion, where at least four British firms of importance are seeking to erect plants. The capital at present invested in the shipbuilding industry of the Dominion amounts to $47,000,000 and the number of men employed is 23,500.

Canada's ambition is to lift herself from eighth to fifth position among ship-owning countries by the end of the year. Before the war her tonnage all told was 1,200,000, and in spite of war losses, today it is 1,475,000, with the goal of 2,000,000 tons set for the year's work.

Everything except ship plates has been produced in Canada and the new mill at Sydney, Nova Scotia, erected by the Dominion Steel Company at a cost of $5,000,000 is expected to begin operations daily and may be working by the time this appears in print.

It is useful and important to note that the 23 state-owned steamers in commission, operated by a subsidiary of the Canadian National Railways called the Canadian Government Merchant Marine Company, Limited, earned a good profit last year.

Palmer—He Seeks Nomination by the Democrats

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right of self-protection. It possesses the right of self-defense and it has the right to use in its own defense any lawful weapon at hand, and any process of any court. That, lawyers and everybody else will agree to as a general proposition. But the value of the case lay in the fact that that principle was acquiesced in by the wage earners and by the employers as a peaceful and orderly process for the establishment of disturbances of that kind.

"Now, the point about it is that the labor organization involved in the coal strike, having concurred in the process of the court, having said that they would take the decree and obey it and submit their case to an impartial tribunal, proves that however strong and powerful a labor organization may be, it does not propose to be so arrogant as capital has been in the past, and it will admit that there are two sides to the controversy which ought to be heard.

"That precedent—the coal strike settlement—has been very useful in the railroad situation and in other equally difficult industrial situations, and I am hopeful that a way has been found in that precedent for a better acceptance of that principle of adjustment in all industrial disputes. Because the shame of our industrial situation generally is that during the past thirty years, the government has allowed labor to fight more or less by itself and has not provided the machinery for the adjustment of these industrial disputes in a way that would insure justice to both sides without a resort to force, or threat of a resort to force."